



department for
**culture, media
and sport**

Transfer of The Royal Parks Statement

January 2011

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

Transfer of the management of the 8 Royal Parks and The Royal Parks Agency (TRP) from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to the Greater London Authority (GLA)

The current arrangements and the intended change

It is not widely known that managing the Royal Parks in London is the responsibility of a central government Department, on behalf of the Queen. The team that runs the Royal Parks and reports to the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport is known as The Royal Parks Agency (TRP). We are proud of the work the Agency has done for Londoners and for visitors to London. The Royal Parks are well known across the world and spending time in the Parks is an essential part of a visit to the capital.

This statement is about how the Parks will be made more accountable to the public through the Mayor. The Government does not propose any major changes in relation to how the Parks should be managed, the standards to which they should be maintained, and what should be on offer in the Parks to the public. Prior to transfer this will be summarised in a framework agreement. The Royal Parks are a cherished part of our national heritage as well as being a priceless resource for Londoners and visitors to London. That is understood by all involved in the proposed transfer of management.

At the moment the main line of accountability through Parliament is through Ministers and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. We intend that in future this accountability should be through London's Mayor since all the Royal Parks are in London. The Mayor is a well known figure who is elected every 4 years and is held accountable by Londoners for what he achieves for London and for visitors to London. Managing the Royal Parks would also fit well with the Mayor's existing responsibility for tourism in London as well as his strategic responsibilities for the environment in London.

As a result, we are proposing that the current Royal Parks Agency team would become part of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and report to the Mayor. The GLA would have day to day responsibility for maintaining and managing the Royal Parks, including fulfilling statutory obligations. The Government will need to legislate when the opportunity arises to give the GLA equivalent management powers to those that the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport currently exercises, and to make other provisions needed to give effect to the policies set out in this statement.

The Royal Parks

There are eight Royal Parks managed by The Agency, all within greater London:

- Bushy Park,
- The Green Park,
- Greenwich Park,
- Hyde Park,
- Kensington Gardens,
- The Regent's Park including Primrose Hill,
- Richmond Park and
- St. James's Park.

The Royal Parks Agency currently also manages other land in central London, such as Victoria Tower Gardens, Grosvenor Square Garden, and Brompton Cemetery, which are not part of the Royal Parks themselves. The Government is developing proposals with the GLA and others who, in place of The Royal Parks Agency, will be best placed to take responsibility for these open spaces and structures and monuments within them in future.

Management of the Parks

The Royal Parks are owned by Her Majesty The Queen in right of the Crown. The Parks were, in the main, originally royal hunting grounds and pleasure gardens and were subsequently made over for public use. The Royal Parks are part of the historic Crown lands and were put under the management of the Secretary of State's predecessor in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The general power of management of the Parks currently exercised by the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport derives from the power granted by section 22 of the Crown Lands Act 1851 ('the 1851 Act') to the Commissioners of Works. Day-to-day management is carried out on behalf of the Secretary of State by the Royal Parks Agency, led by its Chief Executive. **We propose that the Royal Parks Agency would no longer be an Executive Agency of the DCMS but instead become an integral but distinct part of the GLA.** Crown Ownership of The Royal Parks would be maintained.

The Government does not propose to divide up the Royal Parks into separate parks operated by individual London boroughs. The Government's aim is to strike an appropriate balance between decentralising power and maintaining the integrity of this historic estate. Greater accountability for the Royal Parks will be introduced at the level of London-wide government, where all the competing interests can be best addressed. The Mayor is accountable to people who live and work in the immediate vicinity of the Parks. He is also accountable to Londoners from other areas who use the Parks, and he is responsible for the quality and interest of what London as a whole contributes to the UK and offers tourists and visitors. The Mayor has recognised the strong interest of the Royal Household and the London boroughs in the good management of the Parks and is considering options for a new governance structure for the Parks as a whole which will offer them a stake in a new supervisory board.

The devolution of management responsibility for the Royal Parks to the GLA will also mean that there will be greater scrutiny of the management of Royal Parks on a regular basis. The London Assembly will be able to hold the actions of the Mayor to account and will have the power to summon officials and seek information.

Retaining oversight where there is a national interest

It is recognised that The Royal Parks are national assets and there may be occasions when it is still necessary for the Government to be able to ensure that national interests are safeguarded. The Secretary of State will have reserve powers to intervene if it appears that the national interest might be compromised. For example it will be essential to ensure that the current use of the Parks and their roads for national ceremonial occasions should continue in a manner which befits their status. Such events must always be given priority over local matters or other events. This is one example of where the Secretary of State will be able to ensure, through a power of intervention, that the Royal Parks continue to be managed in the national interest and will be able to ensure that future management is not inconsistent with, or undermines, the significance or status of the Royal Parks.

Regulation making powers

Currently, under the Parks Regulations (Amendment) Act 1926, the Secretary of State makes regulations that he considers necessary for securing the proper management of the Parks. The principal regulations are The Royal Parks and Other Open Spaces Regulations 1997, and these cover matters such as the hours of opening of a Park or of particular parts of it, carrying on any trade or business in the Park, the conduct of persons using the Park as regards, for example, littering, climbing trees, lighting fires, damaging property and keeping control of animals. These Regulations are subject to the approval of Parliament. If any person fails to comply with, or acts in contravention of, any regulations, he is guilty of an offence against the Parks Regulation Act 1872 and is liable on summary conviction to a penalty. The regulations are enforced by the Metropolitan Police. **We intend to create an equivalent bye-law making power for the GLA. Instead of an approval by Parliament it would be subject to confirmation from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.**

Section 62 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act provides that regulations may also be made by the Secretary of State for imposing and recovering charges for leaving vehicles, or vehicles of any class, in the Park. These regulations are subject to the approval of Parliament. **We intend to create an equivalent bye-law making power for the GLA. Instead of an approval by Parliament it would be subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.**

Summary of the benefits of the transfer

By transferring responsibility to the GLA, reporting to London's Mayor, we intend to ensure clear democratic accountability to Londoners on the management and operation of these historic parks and open spaces. Through the Mayor, there would be a visible public champion for the Royal Parks. Better accountability is likely to lead to management which is more responsive to the needs and expectations of park users and local people.

We intend the GLA to have the opportunity to include the future management of the Parks in the broader plans which the Mayor develops for London. There will be close links to London-wide policy on a range of issues which affect the Parks including planning, transport, environment, tourism and sport. The Mayor will be well placed to seek out opportunities for private sector support for the parks. The Mayor recognises that for successful transfer of management of the Royal Parks there is a need to ensure:

- The national importance of the Royal Parks continues to be recognised
- The identity and character of the Royal Parks, which underpins their importance to local residents and visitors, is not adversely affected
- The high quality of the Royal Parks and their unique identity is maintained and enhanced where possible
- The wide range of interests within, and uses of, the Royal Parks continue to be recognised and valued
- The management of the eight Royal Parks is retained by a single administration
- Local representation is adequately accounted for

A policy framework will set out the parameters in which the GLA manage the Parks.

There are a number of conditions which will be built into the framework. Key issues this will address include:

- The Parks must be managed on behalf of the nation as a whole
- The Royal Parks Management Structure will be an integral but a distinct part of the GLA
- It is likely a Board will be established to manage the Parks. This is likely to comprise a Chair appointed by the Mayor of London. Members appointed by the Mayor are likely to include representatives from the London Boroughs and a Member appointed by or on behalf of the Sovereign
- The natural and built features must be maintained to a high standard
- That the GLA must consult widely on any major changes to The Royal Parks
- That the GLA continue to honour the informal arrangements made by TRP with the Royal Household and the Army in relation to ceremonial use of the parks which should have overriding priority
- Quiet recreation by the public remains the parks' primary use
- That there will be no negative impacts on delivery of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Diamond Jubilee, ceremonial and other state events
- That the transfer will not take place until post 2012 to minimise disruption to the Olympic and Paralympic Games
- The level of funding the GLA will receive from the Government will be agreed at the outset but is subject to future spending reviews.
- Monitoring arrangements will need to be put in place post transfer to ensure that any teething problems are dealt with



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2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH
www.culture.gov.uk